



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor 2-82 Abn. Public Affairs)

Got you covered

Pfc. Ryan Cole, a paratrooper with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security during a dedication ceremony for a renovated school in the Adhamiyah District April 21.

Combat medics proven under pressure

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - There's countless hours of training involved in becoming certified as an Army medic.

However, for some healthcare specialists, the seal of approval doesn't come with a certificate on graduation day, but from the experience of performing their duties under the added stresses a combat zone thrown into the mix.

A healthcare specialist at Joint Security Station Thrasher, Pfc. Tony Lawry said every opportunity he gets, whether lying on his cot or rolling in a convoy, he thinks about all the possible injuries that he might come across - what he might see, what his thought process

will be, and what he needs to do.

"The first time I saw something I reacted with training," said Lawry, a native of the seaside town of Morro Bay, Calif. "It was exactly what I've trained to do in my head, on my buddies, on manikins hundreds of times."

On Saint Patrick's Day, when JSS Thrasher was only a couple of days old, the first challenge appeared in the form of a Soldier with a gunshot wound to the leg.

Although not the smartest of ideas, he ran from behind cover to get to the wounded Soldier and training took control.

"(The) first thing I did (was) I rushed up, cut away his pants, found the wound, put the tourniquet on, gave him morphine and got him the hell out of there," said Lawry, who is a member of 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry

Regiment, based out of Fort Bliss, Texas and operating in Baghdad with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

The gunshot victim had a "through and through," meaning the bullet went in one side and out the other.

"One of the first things medics learn is when someone is shot in the leg you just drop your knee there, jamming it on the artery," Lawry said. "You'll stop that bleeding. If it hurts the patient, not doing any further damage, but is physically painful, you're probably doing it right."

Lawry said when medics are working on their fellow Soldiers, one of their own, all

Combat medics prove training to be effective

Medic

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they think about is getting him stable and evacuated.

As medics at a JSS, working side-by-side with Iraqi troops, they also work on people that aren't in the same uniform.

"I treated this guy. I don't remember his name, I don't really remember what he looks like, but I remember his wounds and what was going on," Lawry said. "Something in adrenaline enhances memory and when someone is bleeding in front of you, you're going to get a little spike."

Another issue medics face is the unpredictability of the situations that come up. They don't always know all of the circumstances behind every person that they come across.

"It's basically fly by the seat of your pants, moment's notice, 'Hey, we got casualties coming in' and you don't really know what's going on until they're right in front of your eyes," said Spc. Andrew Demma, the senior medic at the



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

Medical staff members at the Camp Liberty aid station rush to aid casualties after an improvised explosive device detonated near a patrol April 21.

JSS, also with 2-12th Cavalry.

A medic sees things not everyone sees, hears things not everyone hears and smells things not everyone smells.

"I'll have trouble getting to sleep and then when I finally do get to sleep I'll have a nightmare. I'll wake up and all I'll remember is seeing (what I saw), smelling that smell - that smell I get for everything. It used to be associated with just a bad smell, now it's

connected to some of the things I've seen. Sometimes I'd wake up drenched in sweat," Lawry said.

Like nightmares some of the experiences can be difficult to get through, but somehow medics learn to get through them.

"If you're in a helping profession that's got to say something about the type of person you are," Demma said. "When the end result is death, it's always going to be tough, but its some-

thing you get used to."

Both agreed that it's not the first time they've seen someone die and it probably won't be the last.

In the end, the fulfillment that comes with being a medic outweighs the bad that comes hand-in-hand in the career field - even with the added horror of doing it on the battle field.

Lawry said a feeling of pride took over when a doctor told him that he saved the Soldier's life and that he should be naming his kids after him.

"I felt like I finally had done my job," Lawry said. "I can say I've been under fire treating a guy (and) that makes it so that people listen to you more. I feel if someone listens to you, and respects what you're saying because you've been there and you've done it, you can do your job better."

"Those nightmares - I lose a little sleep and have to change a sweaty shirt," Lawry said. "The smell - I'll get over it. If it stays with me the rest of my life, I'll get used to it."

Arabic Phrase of the Day

tabiib

Defined:
dentist

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 99
Low: 70



Tomorrow

High: 101
Low: 73



Friday

High: 99
Low: 77

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Small contingent; big strike against terrorism

**By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - It has more than 50 natural and artificial lakes and 16 mountains higher than 6,000 feet. It's a country only slightly larger than Vermont. It has a population of approximately 2 million citizens. Some of them have been calling the heart of the Middle East home.

They are the Macedonian Army Contingent, based here and working in concert with the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team from Fort Hood, Texas.

Lazar Elenovski, the Macedonian Minister of Defense, kept a promise to visit with his country's Soldiers in Iraq, visiting this base camp north of Baghdad April 28.

The commander of the Macedonian Contingent, Capt. Trajkovski Vlatko, said before heading for Iraq, the defense minister promised to visit them. His arrival in Taji kept that promise.

After a lunch in the Colton Room at one of the camp's dining facilities with 'Ironhorse' leaders and his troops, Elenovski headed down the street to the troops' living quarters where they went over operations

and took a look at Soldier issues.

Vlatko, said that the Minister of Defense has been very good to the troops. He said it is easy for his troops to relate to the 36-year-old senior Macedonian defense official.

Vlatko and his troops explained different weaponry and equipment they currently use when they head outside of the wire to their top defense official. Elenovski said there is always room for improvement, though what they have is working.

He noted that combat equipment standards are getting better and better.

In addition, he said, the Macedonian Office of Defense Cooperation is also working on modernizing the soldiers' equipment.

Despite being a relatively new force, the Macedonian Army Contingent has quickly developed an outstanding reputation and because of the company-size unit's great reputation, Col. Paul E. Funk II, commander of the Ironhorse Brigade, said he would have no problem having the Macedonian contingent covering his front and watching his back when disaster strikes.

"I have had command of them during major operations and have watched them in awe," Funk said about the second group of

Macedonian Soldiers he has worked with since deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Confidence in their abilities is something that flows freely among the leadership, both American and Macedonian.

During their stay in Iraq, Elenovski said Macedonian troops have proven to have the capabilities to handle missions. He said that Macedonia, a young country of only 15 years, is extremely proud to be a part of the coalition forces.

"We feel that our contribution is important and shows our commitment to being a partner in aid," Elenovski said. "I hear over and over again on how well our soldiers are performing."

The Minister of Defense said the Republic of Macedonia, previously the southernmost part of the socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, will continue to give support as long as the coalition forces need it.

Elenovski later reiterated the importance of being a part of the global war on terrorism and standing up a democracy in Iraq.

"Iraqis are now starting to stand up, but to leave them now would be too soon," said Funk, a native of Roundup, Mont.



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

Macedonian Minister of Defense Lazar Elenovski, takes a look at the Macedonian Army Contingent's tactical vehicles during a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq April 28. The soldiers are currently attached to 1st 'Ironhorse' Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Action never stops for paratroopers at COP Ford

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2-82nd Abn. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Sniper fire sent Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Applegate ducking for cover behind a stack of old, rusted air conditioners. As Applegate scanned the rooftops for the shooter, a young boy came pedaling up on a bicycle.

"Get out of here, kid," Applegate warned.

"Bomb," the boy said, pointing down the street he had just come from.

"Great," Applegate muttered. "Wait here," he told the boy as he ducked around a corner to find his interpreter.

Applegate's platoon had begun the day by investigating a storage yard full of suspicious chlorine drums. Then they were pinned down by a sniper attack. Now they had a bomb to worry about. And they had only been on patrol for an hour.

It was just another typical day for paratroopers based at Combat Outpost Ford, in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District.

Since the paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment occupied the COP in late February, the tempo of operations has been relentless. The base is located in the Al Beida area, just south of Sadr City. As allies of the legitimate government, the paratroopers pose a threat to the illegal militia dominance. As the paratroopers have pushed out into the area, cracking down on illegal activity, the militias have responded with attacks.

"You never really know what to expect. It's the same as riding a roller coaster. It's an adrenalin rush," said Spc. Zachry King, from Jacksonville, Fla.

The wild day COP Ford experienced Apr. 22 was a good illustration of what the paratroopers are facing on a daily basis.

Back at the scene of the sniper attack, Applegate brought his interpreter - a tall, gangly Iraqi nicknamed 'Fox' - over to find out what the boy was talking about. The boy said he had seen men planting a bomb on the road near a mosque just down the street. 2nd Platoon mounted up to investigate.

"Smells like an ambush," King said



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor 2-82 Abn. Public Affairs)

Sgt. William Kok with Co. B, 2nd Bn., 325th Abn. Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div., pulls security while his platoon investigates a possible roadside bomb Baghdad's Adhamiyah District April 22.

cheerfully, as he headed for his truck.

The platoon moved cautiously once they reached the mosque. They made a slow circuit around the building. Men in cafes across the street looked on with amusement.

"Seen any bombs?" one of the paratroopers asked them.

No one offered any information, and a thorough search of the area failed to turn up any explosive devices. Platoon leader 1st Lt. Paul Benfield, of Old Town, Fla., decided to call off the hunt.

Next, the platoon headed back to the chlorine storage yard to get a picture of the spot where the sniper's bullet had impacted. They reached the site, but no sooner had they dismounted than an urgent call came in on the radio. COP Ford had just come under attack.

The paratroopers jumped back in their humvees and sped off in the direction of the COP. A siren on the lead truck wailed as the trucks pushed their way through on-coming traffic. Inside Benfield's vehicle, the radio crackled as details about the attack started to come in.

Apparently, a man had approached one of the access gates of the COP pushing a rocket launcher disguised as a wheeled fruit stand. When he was close enough, the man ditched the fruit, fired the rocket, and fled

the scene.

Thankfully, the rocket had been stopped by protective concrete barriers around the COP. No one had been hurt.

Later, Delta Company's 3rd Platoon retrieved the two abandoned launchers from a lot less than half a mile from the COP. They left the launchers in the courtyard of the COP, where Spc. Charles Tisdale and Spc. David Higuera were debating if the rockets had been aimed at them. Then someone came out and told them that the rockets had impacted miles away, in the Green Zone.

"Well, I guess they weren't aiming at us," said Higuera, of Phoenix.. "Or if they were, they're really bad shots."

After grabbing a quick bite, meals ready-to-eat, or MREs, 2nd Platoon was back out on the streets. Their next mission was to give a condolence payment to a local man who had been accidentally hit by shotgun shrapnel during a door breach.

By this point, it was getting close to midnight. 2nd Platoon had been on the move for almost 14 hours. But their night wasn't over yet.

On their way back to base, they passed a house they had raided several days earlier. The target hadn't been home then. Now there was a car parked in front. They didn't want to let the man slip through the net again.

They stacked up outside the front gate. King lowered his shoulder and rammed his way through two locked doors, and the paratroopers burst into the house. They searched it up and down, but again, the target wasn't home. A neighbor told them he had fled to Basra.

The paratroopers returned to base. They threw their body armor and helmets down and peeled off their shirts and socks, soaked with sweat. Some went out to the courtyard to rehash the day over cigarettes.

Soon, most drifted back to their bunks. They needed the sleep. It had been a long day, and who knew what tomorrow would be like?

That's how it is on a roller-coaster ride.

Operation Iron Claw scratches IEDs

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4-1 Inf. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - One of the terrorists' most valuable weapons against residents, Iraqi and Multi-National Division-Baghdad forces is improvised explosive devices - homemade bombs typically placed on the side of the road and detonated at opportune times to cause the most casualties.

Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, protects Iraqis, as well as MND-B forces, throughout the Rashid district from these IEDs on a daily basis through Operation Iron Claw.

Operation Iron Claw is the all-important mission of clearing roads in the district so Iraqi civilians can walk their neighborhoods safely and coalition forces can conduct their missions freely.

While the mission is a vital one, the job consists of long hours of boredom, but even a moment of complacency can cost lives.

April 13 was one of those quiet



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith 4-1 Inf. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Anibal Santiago, a squad leader with Co. A, STB, 4th Inf. BCT, 1st Inf. Div. scans his sector during a route-clearance mission in Baghdad April 13.

days where the patrol found nothing, but it's these days the "Wolverines" of the brigade's STB must not get too comfortable and focus on the mission at hand.

Sgt. Anibal Santiago, a route-clear-

ance squad leader with Co. A from Orlando, Fla., said although it's stressful to go looking for IEDs while others are avoiding them, he finds satisfaction in the job.

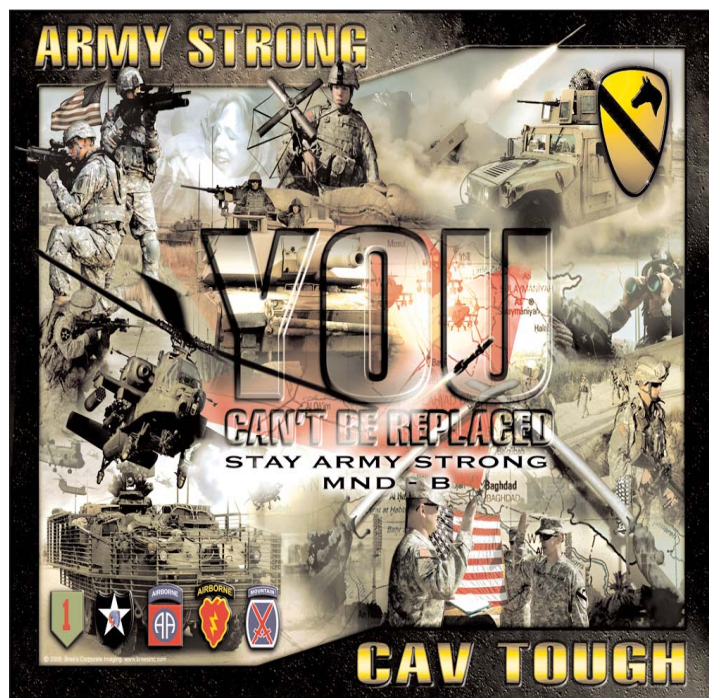
"It feels pretty good to be the first ones out there to clear the route so the rest of the brigade can do their job," Santiago said.


Spc. Robert Bradford, a route-clearance team leader from Atlanta, said his platoon takes IED attacks personally.

"It makes us sad to hear that our battle buddies got hit by an IED," he said. "It also makes us angry to be here inside the wire when it happens."


While riding around for hour after hour every day with nothing to look at but long miles of road can get monotonous, Bradford said that the long hours put in on the routes are worth it.

"We're out there multiple hours," Bradford said. "If we can stay an hour longer or two hours longer to find an IED, it makes us feel better knowing our battle buddies get back safe."





**OPERATION IRAQI
FREEDOM**



Fratricide/Friendly Fire

- Always ensure positive target identification.
- Ensure that task standards are followed (i.e., weapons handling, powder-charge preparation, fire and maneuver).
- Ensure that warnings and reports are timely and accurate.
- Ensure that soldiers are well trained in land navigation.
- Reconnoiter when possible.
- Anticipate the effects of stress and fatigue on soldiers.
- Anticipate the effects of battle (limited visibility, unsynchronized actions, chaos and confusion).

STAY ALERT --- STAY ALIVE